



MONDAY MORNING MEMO

Monday, March 5, 2007 ☞ Volume 2, Issue 4

State of the Judiciary Highlights Courts' Work with Families

Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye again commended the CASA program in her annual State of the Judiciary Address, presented February 26th at the Court of Appeals in Albany. "I am pleased also to report the continuing growth of the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) programs," she said, noting increases in the number of volunteers and counties served by CASA in the past year. She also mentioned the work with the Seneca Nation in developing the State's first Tribal CASA program, and the creation of the CASA Assistance Program within the Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution and Court Improvement Programs.

She noted a number of successes in serving children and families, including:

- The State's passage of the federal child protective system audit, and the court system's integral part in that process;
- The collaborative "Sharing Success" teams, which bring together local departments of social services and family courts;
- The State's first cross-systems data book and website, which join court and social service statistics;
- The Adoption Now initiative and its removal of barriers to adoption; and
- The Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children's many accomplishments and new focus on the needs of adolescents aging out of the child welfare system.

Chief Judge Kaye cautioned, however, to "discipline ourselves never to dwell on successes. There's just too much left to be done, and the picture in Family Court still is grim." She discussed reductions in the numbers of children in foster care, but said those numbers still represent a challenge for the overburdened family court system. To address that workload, which has increased since the 2005 Permanency Law and the Nixmary Brown tragedy in New York City, she announced a proposal to the State Legislature for 39 more Family Court judgeships. She said, "Additional Family Court judges are essential to meet the critically important needs of New York's families and children."

Judge Kaye led the address by urging legislative approval of judicial pay raises, which have not increased since 1999. Judge Kaye also highlighted court reform, judicial selection, the town and village justice courts action plan, and matrimonial reforms including no-fault divorce.

Press reports following the address focused on Judge Kaye's proposal to integrate probation efforts into the court system. A proposal will be submitted to the Legislature to create a new State Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives to provide probation officer training, and distribute State funding to localities. With a newly empowered State Probation Commission, the new Office will shape probation policy and practice in the State. The recommendation for the new state office can be found in a report at www.courts.State.ny.us/reports/future-probation_2007.pdf

To read the full text of the State of the Judiciary, go to <http://www.courts.State.ny.us/admin/Stateofjudiciary/soj2007.pdf>



Drug Court Conference Offers Hope for Families

New York is the only State in the country to take drug courts “to scale,” according to C. West Huddleston, CEO of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (www.nadcp.org) and Executive Director of the National Drug Court Institute. Huddleston, in his plenary address at the annual conference of the New York Association of Drug Treatment Court Professionals, lauded the fact that all but two counties in New York have criminal and/or family treatment courts.

Drug Treatment Courts including Family Treatment Courts (FTCs) represent the highest increase of any kind of court in the country, Huddleston said. FTCs are reuniting families at a higher rate than any other Family Court strategy.

At the conference, Karen Carroll, Deputy Statewide Project Manager for the Child Welfare Improvement Project (CIP); Robin Robinson, Executive Director of the CASA State Association (CASANYS); and Darlene Ward, Manager of the CASA Assistance Program at NYS UCS, presented on the role of CASA and work with the Seneca Nation in NYS to develop a CASA program within their Peacemaker Court. Robin and Darlene also participated in a roundtable discussion on CASA and Law Guardian roles in drug courts. The discussion was led by Mark Leider, attorney with Lawyers for Children, Inc. in NYC and a former CASA in Florida.

The focus of a pre-conference seminar was to explore drug court relations with the six Native American Nations in New York State. Speaker Nadja Jones, Executive Director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association addressed strategies for working effectively with tribal communities, and referenced the critical role of CASA within the court system. Jones said one in 25 native children are known to be abused or neglected each year, and one in five are at risk of family disruptions.

A number of helpful resources on working with tribal communities are available on the NICWA website: www.nicwa.org/resources/infopackets/index.asp

A presentation on Coping with Participant Relapse addressed the frequency of and reasons for relapse in drug and family treatment courts. Trainer Joe Lunievics, Deputy Director of the Training Institute of NDRI, Inc. shared data from a SAMHSA study showing that of 1,652 treatment interventions, there is a 70% relapse rate after one month and a six month relapse rate after 87%. With crack/cocaine abuse, there is a 90% relapse rate after three months. He focused on steps that professionals in this field need to take to avoid vicarious traumatization, and to focus on the tools clients use to stay sober rather than the circumstances that led to relapse.

A presentation on Manhattan Family Treatment Court suggested 20 strategies for success, including utilizing a single judge, meeting monthly as a team, partnering with mental health providers, creating an on-site support group, and setting up aftercare services mid-way through the recovery process. They also urged considering the length of a parent’s addiction when confronted with a relapse, and requiring a report on services to the children on every court date.



~~~~~ **The A-Train** ~~~~~

***CASA Directors Meet to Discuss Adolescents, State Initiatives***



*Albany Roundtable On Board Recruitment*



*NYC Regional CASA Directors Meeting*

Three program directors meetings were held around the State in February, facilitated by the UCS CASA Assistance Program and CASA: Advocates for Children of NYS. The directors discussed adolescent advocacy, volunteer recruitment and retention, board recruitment, and updates from NYS UCS and CASANYS.

Presentations on the Child Welfare Court Improvement Project were given by Christine Kiesel, Statewide Child Welfare Court Improvement Project Manager, at the Albany meeting; by Karen Carroll, Deputy Statewide Child Welfare Court Improvement Project Manager, in Buffalo; and by Trista Borra, Deputy Statewide Child Welfare Court Improvement Project Manager, in New York City.



## **CASA ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

OFFICE OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND COURT IMPROVEMENT

### ***LGBTQ Train the Trainer To Be Held in April***

Attached is a flyer for an upcoming Train the Trainer Program designed to provide individuals with tools and resources to facilitate trainings and discussions on issues relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning youth. The training will be held April 20-21<sup>st</sup> in Ulster County. For more information, contact Rob Conlon at [rconlon@courts.State.ny.us](mailto:rconlon@courts.State.ny.us).

### **Resources**

#### ***Fetal Alcohol Resources Available from SAMHSA***

*The Language of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders* is an excellent two-page flyer produced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It defines FASD and its effects, as well as other alcohol-related neurodevelopmental and birth defects. This resource, plus many other informative publications, is available at <http://www.fasdcenter.samhsa.gov/grabGo/factSheets.cfm>

#### ***Parents' Voices Help Advise the Child Welfare System***

*Rise* is an informative magazine developed by and for parents involved in the child welfare system. The magazine is part of efforts in New York State and across the country to improve the support and engagement of parents in the system. This goal is being facilitated by informational meetings between parents and court and child welfare staff, training, support groups, and parent advocate programs. Some of the issues that parents have raised include the abuse of children in foster homes, attitudes of caseworkers toward parents in the system, the need for more information on the child protective and court process, and mechanisms for systems change. For more information, go to [www.youthcomm.org/rise](http://www.youthcomm.org/rise) or contact [mccarthy@youthcomm.org](mailto:mccarthy@youthcomm.org).

### **Quote of the Week**

"The simple truth is that helping families and children in crisis, assuring a better life for them, translates into better courts and a better life for all of society. It's not just their future, it's ours too."

**-- Chief Judge Judith Kaye, 2007 State of the Judiciary**

*This is a publication of the*  
**NYS Unified Court System, Office of Court Administration, Division of Court Operations**  
**Court Appointed Special Advocates Assistance Program**  
*For further information, contact:*  
**Darlene Ward, Program Manager**  
**98 Niver Street, Cohoes, New York 12047**  
**Phone: (518) 238-4360; Fax: (518) 238-2951**  
**Email: [daward@courts.state.ny.us](mailto:daward@courts.state.ny.us) / Website: [www.nycourts.gov/ip/casa/](http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/casa/)**